

INIGO



The Old Rectory III

ALBOURNE, WEST SUSSEX
SOLD

At the very end of a quiet country lane lies The Old Rectory, an exceptional Grade II-listed Georgian home set in eight acres of grounds. Surrounded by exquisite walled gardens, the house is positioned on the edge of the pretty village of Albourne in West Sussex. Wonderfully peaceful and entirely private, the house is surrounded by open fields and has gentle views of the Sussex Downs. Painstakingly restored and designed to an unparalleled standard, it unfolds over some 6,300 sq ft across three storeys and eight bedrooms. A series of beautiful and airy living spaces lead from the finely composed original 18th-century house to encompass an ancillary barn and coach house, which now blend harmoniously to create a unified home. The charming villages of Hassocks, Ditchling and Hurstpierpoint are all nearby, in addition to the towns of Brighton and Lewes. London Victoria can be reached by train from Haywards Heath station in 44 minutes and London Bridge in 47 minutes.

We've written about life here in more depth.

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Setting the Scene

The house is positioned in the immaculately landscaped and carefully conceived grounds. It is built from brick, rendered and partially tile hung; large box sash and French windows punctuate the elevations. Made up of two parallel ranges with a clay tiled cross axial roof, there is a single-storey wing to the west, comprising the old coach house and connected by what was, at one time, a barn, now housing the capacious kitchen; all effortlessly combining to form a linear S-shaped plan. The home has a wonderful labyrinthine feel and winds its way around in a charming fashion, with beautiful views of the surrounding gardens and landscape from every window.

The original house has retained its elegant Georgian features, including six-panel doors, joinery, cast-iron radiators, chimney pieces and fine plaster work. The connected barn has a charming vernacular character, with exposed original oak beams set into the roof's open pitch. Connected by an interior hallway, the old coach house has been created as an exceptional living room, subtly designed in a peaceful Van Duysen-like manner, with sleeping quarters above. A trio of Crittall doors have been carefully set into the exterior elevations, protecting the historic rat trap brickwork. The house is a masterclass in layering in terms of conservation, architecture and decoration. For more information, please see the History section.

The Grand Tour

From Church Lane, brick paving connects the double garage and the entrance to the main driveway. Electronic remote-operated wooden gates with a camera security system open to a circular pea gravel driveway. Banks of pale Annabelle hydrangeas surround the stone steps that ascend to a pedimented doorcase with narrow pilasters. The six-panel front door is painted white with a decorative fanlight above.

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Entry is to the spacious hallway, where the original closed string dog-leg staircase lies. There is an open vista to the drawing room and garden beyond. Reclaimed parquet wood flooring has been hand-restored to reveal a wonderful pale-toned patina; the walls are painted chalky white, reflecting the light. Although resolutely Georgian, the materiality and interior architecture somehow also bear traces of both French country style and a sense of the Swedish Gustavian, all combining to create an effortless elegance.

The dining room is positioned immediately to the left of the hall and is currently used as a library and study room. Custom-fitted cabinetry, panelling and bookcases are inset with plates of antique foxed glass. A wooden bolection chimneypiece has marble slips and an open, cast-iron grate; most of the fires throughout the house are fully working. This room is charming in the mornings when it enjoys the rising eastern light.

The drawing room and an informal sitting room lie directly ahead at the southern range of the plan. The drawing room is wonderfully bright and spacious, with the elevations framed by a particularly excellent plaster box cornice. A painted bolection chimney piece surrounds a large open hearth with a cast-iron grate, and the walls are painted a pale stone colour. Large windows frame pretty views, and a glass-paned door leads to the veranda. Adjacent is a richly painted and intimate sitting room featuring a slate chimneypiece and open fire, surrounded by contemporary panelled cupboards along the entire wall. French windows also open to the veranda. Wonderfully cosy, this is the perfect room for movie screenings on winter nights. A WC is set off the hallway, as is access to the brick-paved cellar below.

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A set of shallow steps descend to the spacious kitchen and ancillary service rooms, including a pantry, larder and laundry room. The generous pantry in the house's original footprint. It has a hexagonal clay tile floor and fitted glass-fronted cupboards perfect for displaying treasured glassware and china along the walls. Further painted cabinets are topped with Carrara marble and house a double butler sink. The crosshead mixer tap is in polished brass by Barber Wilson, and a backup integrated dishwasher and fridge are discretely positioned behind the doors. The walk-in larder is on one side behind a glass door and features open Carrara marble shelves and Edwardian matte white subway tiles.



The kitchen is connected through an open architrave in the pantry and is set in what was once the barn. The kitchen, laundry room and sitting room in these secondary ranges are warmed by underfloor heating. The kitchen is square, with a soaring pitch ceiling featuring exposed timber beams. A trio of large sash windows open to the garden terrace to the south, allowing the room to be flooded with light. An open fire is set high into the chimney stack with space for logs underneath. The cabinetry is brilliant white and in a modern design by Bulthaup, with Carrara marble resting atop both the large island unit and surrounding cupboards. The dishwasher here is also integrated and there is a separate Gaggenau steam cooker under the island unit. A full-height freestanding stainless-steel fridge freezer unit is in the wide-set kitchen alcove.

The boot room is off the kitchen and acts as a secondary lobby with a door to the rear gardens. Paddle steps lead to an office space set above. Service rooms in the home are designed with a level of attention to detail, usually reserved for primary spaces, and the laundry and utility room is also brilliantly conceived. Panelled cupboards are set below Calacatta marble worktops, and a double butler sink is positioned at the window side. A rectangular pitched roof lantern crowns this most usable of spaces. A glamorous WC is adjacent with an entranceway and door clad in polished brass. The walls are painted a glossy pale pink while, in contrast, the casement window is painted in a joyous sunny yellow; the washstand is also topped with marble.

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A sunken living room sits in what was the old coach house, juxtaposed with the Georgian and vernacular spaces that lead before it. The room is some 25 feet deep yet still somehow wonderfully intimate, as the materials employed are brilliantly tactile and enveloping. Washed oak floorboards run the room's depth, complemented by supporting beams and joists left exposed and painted the same chalky shade as the walls. A wall of floor-to-ceiling custom bookshelves surround, and a trio of Crittall doors open to a small terrace. Further storage has been built below the secondary staircase, cleverly designed with the same floorboards, aligned perfectly to the boards on the floor. An additional contemporary fire is set into the open hearth.

Above this room are guest sleeping quarters, where a cabin bedroom with top-to-toe fitted single beds leads to a spacious double bedroom. The room is set into the roof's pitch and clad in butt and bead panelling. Both bed chambers share a shower room, accessed by a pocket door and clad in Carrara marble. A ground-floor service corridor leads to the double garage, and a separate staircase leads to the brilliant home gym above. Similarly set in the garage's roof pitch and entirely clad in bare untreated wooden boards, this room could also make a playroom, a further study or an additional guest space. All the first-floor rooms in this western range of the house feature conservation-grade Velux windows to allow for a similarly brilliant quality of light.

The house's six principal bedrooms are on the upper storeys of the primary range of the house, with the original staircase leading to a spacious landing and three bedrooms, including the principal bedroom suite. Here, sleeping quarters overlook the rear gardens, and a soft boucle oatmeal carpet creates a soft passage. Architectural details include a fine plaster cornice and a Carrara marble chimneypiece, while stripped antique wedding doors inset with foxed glass lead through a generous dressing room with plentiful fitted wardrobing to the en suite bathroom. Calacatta Oro marble is used as the primary material here and features on both floors and walls to encase the wet shower area. A beautiful white ceramic freestanding bath from The Water Monopoly is set beside the window, and there is a wide marble vanity with double sinks. The wet area features both a rainfall and handheld shower, and brassware is nickel plated in a traditional design by Lefroy Brooks.

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Two further bedrooms are set off the landing and share a brilliant bathroom with an Albion Bath Company bateau tub thoughtfully positioned by the window, with direct views to Wolstonbury Hill in the distance. There is also a separate shower area, clad with matt white Edwardian subway tiles, and brassware is nickel plated by Lefroy Brooks. Three further bedrooms are on the uppermost floor of the house, set in the roof's pitch. These rooms share a similarly well-designed bathroom with a separate shower. A generous attic room in the southern roof space is perfect for additional storage.

The Great Outdoors

Encompassing eight acres, the gardens surrounding the house are utterly magical. To the front are sections of lawn, banks of hydrangea arborescent, buxus, shrubs and mature trees, with immediate views to the 12th century flint-built St Bartholomew's church. The gardens envelop the house; an extraordinary meadow sits to the east and leads through freshly mown pathways to a peaceful woodland and the babbling Culter's Brook. This area of the gardens has an ancient mulberry tree and could also make a brilliant paddock or for livestock grazing.

The south-facing walled gardens open from the rear of the house to exceptional views of the South Downs beyond and the vineyards past the curtilage. An expansive York stone terrace is positioned on the exterior of the kitchen. It is shaded by a beautiful mature magnolia tree, the perfect spot for al fresco lunches in warmer months. The old stable block is set to the side, a series of modest connected red brick structures that now encompass the plant room, potting shed and wood store.

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The veranda is set off both the drawing and sitting rooms, an excellent sheltered outdoor room of its own spanning the width of the original house's plan, with a raised platform and painted entirely in the lead-coloured 'Downpipe' by Farrow and Ball to blend harmoniously with the curved lead roof above. White 'Shiro kapitan' wisteria winds its way around the supporting posts, offering a sweet scent in the springtime. A further area for relaxing has been cleverly designed to sit behind the old stable buildings discretely. A square set terrace is laid with brick paving, and there is an open timber and red brick gazebo with pitched clay tile roof and decorative posts, also enveloped in mature wisteria. Adjacent is a Royal Tubs electric hot tub clad in Larchwood, offering an opportunity for deep relaxation and is useable all year round.

A series of expansive set lawns span the width of the entire house, forming a series of gently raised terraces with stone steps inset and surrounded by banks of lavender leading to a parterre garden, defined by its low structured topiary. Traces of forget-me-nots and poppies feature, along with pale pink tulips and sweet peas along the old walls. A further mature magnolia tree is set within the low-clipped hedges, and there are apple and pear trees. Roses gently climb the walls to the rear, inset with tall antique cast iron elevator doors in a decorative design. These doors open to the orchard and open fields beyond the house, framing the beautiful scenery. There are fruit cages, a mini orchard, and an avenue of oak trees along one side. Wildlife is all around, and deer often visit the perimeter. The current owners have further plans for developing the southern part of the gardens in a sympathetic design. Drawings are available upon request.

Out and About

Albourne is a small village at the foot of the South Downs, among excellent walking trails and close to the popular larger villages of Hurstpierpoint, Ditchling and Hassocks. Albourne is home to the Albourne Estate, a family-owned vineyard and winery, just a short walk from The Old Rectory. Hassocks has banks, a chemist, and a post office, and Ditchling has a number of independent shops. Hurstpierpoint, also nearby, is a charming village with various independent provisors, including a butcher, bakery and bookshop. The surrounding villages also have a great choice of restaurants and pubs. Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, Lewes & Brighton are nearby for wider amenities.

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There are several highly regarded schools in the local area, both state and private and for all ages, including Cumnor House Sussex prep school, Windlesham House prep school, Hurstpierpoint College, Brighton College and Ardingly College. Further excellent schools less than an hour's drive away include Rodean School and Lancing College.

The train station at Hassocks runs services to London Bridge (59 minutes) and Victoria (56 minutes). Haywards Heath has more trains running throughout the hour, with a journey to London Victoria of 44 minutes and London Bridge of 47 minutes. The A23 also provides quick access to London, the M25 and Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

Council Tax Band: G



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About

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